

of the 1st Calvary Division, who recently lost his life while on patrol in Iraq.

Upon learning of about his life, I was struck by all the adventures that Corporal Kowalczyk had undertaken. He had been the captain of the swim team at Macalester College, traveled extensively throughout Europe, the Middle East, including working as a handyman in Jerusalem. I understand that he even leapt from an iceberg and swam in the frigid waters of the Arctic Ocean. Clearly, this was a young man that seized all that life had to offer.

Three years ago, at the age of 29, he began a new adventure and joined the Army. According to his family he loved it.

During a recent memorial service in Iraq, one of his comrades SSG Richard Coombes stated: "He was a man who taught me that there was still beauty in our everyday life, even in Iraq. I looked at him and wondered if he had already figured life out. He was in such peace and harmony." CPT Kevin Bradley would often notice that Corporal Kowalczyk would look from the rooftops at the area around him. When asked why, he reportedly would reply, "You should see it up here. It's beautiful." Another friend remembered him as "a gentle, kind soul, I cannot think of anybody who did not love this man."

And yet he never forgot why he was deployed to Iraq—to help the Iraqi people. This commitment was reflected in the letters that he would write home asking for history books that he could give to Iraqis that he met, and pencils, notepads, and Hershey bars for Iraqi children.

What a fine man. What an extraordinary life.

I will always remember him and his family in my prayers.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. (Mr. NELSON of Nebraska). The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following my remarks, Senator DORGAN be recognized to speak.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I stand today in strong support of H.R. 1591, the congressional supplemental bill. In casting our votes on this important measure, all of us must ask a fundamental question: Do we support a change in course in Iraq or do we want more of the same?

This supplemental bill delivers over \$100 billion in necessary funding, an increase of \$4 billion over the President's request for our military forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, fully meeting the President's request. More important, the bill establishes a change in course for our policy in Iraq by transitioning the mission of American troops away from involvement in a growing civil

war to a more targeted mission, one focused on counterterrorism, training and equipping Iraqi forces, and force protection for American troops.

The supplemental bill that was voted on today offers a path away from the current quagmire in Iraq, a state of bloodshed and chaos which is straining the U.S. Army, diverting our attention from a resurgent al-Qaida in Afghanistan and elsewhere, and finally sacrificing too many of our finest men and women.

We must never forget the enormous personal sacrifices our troops are asked to make every day. As of today, 162 Pennsylvanians and more than 3,300 Americans as a whole have given their lives in Iraq, with tens of thousands more suffering lifelong injuries, including amputations, severe burns, and traumatic brain injuries. On Monday, nine members of the 82nd Airborne Division gave their lives when a suicide bomber infiltrated their outpost in Diyala Province, the deadliest single attack on U.S. forces in Iraq since December 2005.

We pray today for our fallen heroes—today and always—but we also pray for ourselves that we may be worthy of their valor.

Our troops have done all they can. They have deposed Saddam, and they fought insurgents and foreign terrorists. They spent the last 4 years partnering with their Iraqi counterparts in a courageous effort to establish the foundation for democracy and a free society. They have been asked to mediate disputes and protect innocent civilians as targets in a crossfire of a civil war.

So our troops have done their part. Now it is time for the Congress and the White House to do their part. As retired military generals, experienced diplomats, and scholars with intimate knowledge of Iraq have declared and as a bipartisan Iraq Study Group concluded just last winter, any success in Iraq requires a political and diplomatic solution and cannot be achieved through military might alone.

Just ask General Petraeus, who, upon assuming his new command in March, declared:

There is no military solution to a problem like that in Iraq, to the insurgency of Iraq . . . A political resolution of various differences . . . will determine, in the long run, the success of that effort.

GEN Barry McCaffrey recently returned from his latest trip to Iraq. One of our most widely respected former military officers, General McCaffrey fought in Vietnam with distinction, commanded a division in the gulf war in 1991, and led U.S. operations in Latin America. He submitted a formal report on his trip, which is very sober reading. One line stands out for me, and I quote from General McCaffrey's report:

No Iraqi Government official, coalition soldier, diplomat, reporter, foreign nongovernmental organization, nor contractor can walk the streets of Baghdad, nor Mosul, nor

Kirkuk, nor Basra, nor Tikrit, nor Najaf, nor Ramadi, without heavily armed protection.

This supplemental bill provides the Congress and the White House a chance to do their part to ensure success in our mission in Iraq. It brings to an end the "stay the course" mentality that defined our approach for the past 4 years in at least three ways.

First, the supplemental revises our mission in Iraq away from policing a civil war toward training and equipping Iraqi security forces, protecting U.S. forces, and conducting targeted counterterrorism operations.

Second, it initiates a phased redeployment of our troops no later than October 1 of this year, with a goal of removing all combat troops by April 1 of next year. These steps were called for in the bipartisan Iraq Study Group and represent the will of the American people. I am pleased that the Congress is finally following suit.

Third, the supplemental at least holds the Iraqi Government accountable by setting measurable and achievable benchmarks on the Iraqi Government for ending the sectarian conflict, political reconciliation, and improving the lives of ordinary Iraqis.

If the Iraqi Government refuses to meet these benchmarks, they will put at risk future U.S. assistance and the continued presence of U.S. troops. We have repeatedly seen past benchmarks established by the Bush administration and the Iraqi Government come and go without progress and without consequence. Just this week, a revealing article in USA Today highlighted the growing lack of confidence among Iraqi Parliamentarians in the al-Maliki government, and one legislator was quoted as saying:

This government hasn't delivered and is not capable of doing the job.

This bill, once and for all, establishes a series of accountable benchmarks.

Finally, the supplemental recognizes the toll this war has taken on our uniformed military, especially the Army and Marine Corps. It establishes a set of troop-readiness standards that establish minimum levels between deployments for our troops and limits the duration of those deployments.

The legislation includes a Presidential waiver authority, but it would require the President to certify that the continued strain on our military forces is in our national interest. These provisions will force the President to think long and hard about the impact of the Iraq war on the readiness of our military to handle other pressing challenges, including the need to fight and kill al-Qaida terrorists wherever we find them.

The congressional debate that has helped produce this supplemental bill has been attacked by the President and his supporters. However, our Secretary of Defense last week described our debate as helpful in "communicating to the Iraqis that this is not an open-ended commitment."

Two of my distinguished colleagues, on a recent visit to Baghdad, explicitly

informed Iraqi leaders that growing congressional pressure on the need for a phased redeployment signified that it was time for the Iraqi Government to get serious and start taking the hard steps needed for political reconciliation, including a fair distribution of oil revenues. Without the steps this Congress has taken, without the pressure it has applied, the Maliki regime would continue to be receiving an open-ended blank check from the White House, with our soldiers paying the ultimate price.

The President has regrettably chosen to distort and malign our intentions in sending him the bill that is before us today. I wish to take a few minutes to briefly address those charges and demonstrate why it is the President—the President—and not the Congress who has cynically held hostage the funding and well-being of our troops.

First, the President has repeatedly charged that our military forces needed the supplemental funding immediately and any delay to pass the supplemental in his exact specifications would harm their readiness. A number of my colleagues already cited authoritative research from the Congressional Research Service that demonstrates that the needed funding is available to the U.S. Army from mid to late July—let me say that again, mid to late July—without jeopardizing the war effort. However, there is a much larger cynicism at play here. There would be no need for a supplemental bill at all if this President had submitted an honest, regular budget request for this fiscal year.

Four years into the war, this administration should be able to tell the American people how much the war in Iraq cost. Yet the administration has refused to incorporate wartime costs into his regular budget request, instead seeking to finance our operations in Iraq and Afghanistan through a series of supplemental bills. Of course, the President doesn't want to do that because regular appropriations requests are subject to greater public and congressional scrutiny.

Financing the war through supplemental bills also allows the President to better hide the impact of the war on our Federal budget. It is not surprising that a President who has run up the largest deficits in modern history would want to hide that fact. Doing so on the backs of our troops is outrageous.

So the President is plain wrong when he attacks the Congress on supplemental funding for our troops in Iraq. The reality is that we have exceeded the President's request and on a timetable which is quicker than that of the previous Congress controlled by the President's party.

If the President chooses to veto this bill, it is he—it is he—who is prolonging this process and denying necessary funds to our young men and women in uniform. If the President had been honest with the Congress and the

American people on the true cost of this war from the very beginning, we would not have needed this supplemental bill.

The second claim the President has made over and over again in recent weeks is that this supplemental bill is larded up with porkbarrel spending that is unrelated to our military operation in Iraq and Afghanistan. Yet, once again, the President is distorting both his own actions and those of Congress for crude political gain. We should not forget that the President's original request for supplemental funding also included funds not related to the war in Afghanistan and in Iraq. The President's request included money for debt relief in Kosovo, cultural exchanges, and assistance to refugees in Burundi. The President keeps calling for a clean bill, yet his own request to the Congress included extra items with no connection to Iraq or Afghanistan. In light of the President's request, the Congress, acting as an independent and equal branch of Government, engaged in its own deliberations and determined other emergency priorities that required funding through this supplemental bill.

This President seems to think that the Congress exists merely to follow his orders and that it should not exercise any independent judgment. This may have been the case with our predecessors but not with this Congress and not with this Senator. We were elected by the people of our States, and we report to them, not the President and not the Vice President. So the Congress acted to ensure additional funding for a number of key priorities.

The President has broadly tarred these projects as "egregious porkbarrel." Does the President believe that label applies to the \$1.2 billion in funds for accelerated production of mine-resistant vehicles so our soldiers have a better chance of surviving IED attacks? Does he believe that label applies to \$2.1 billion to better provide health care for our veterans? Does he believe that \$650 million to help with the children's health insurance shortfall in 14 States is frivolous spending? I could also talk about the funding for victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and our farmers and on and on.

This supplemental bill, agreed upon by the House and the Senate, is a responsible effort that guarantees the funds our troops need, provides funding for other critical emergency priorities, and sets a badly needed change in course in Iraq.

In conclusion, our policy in Iraq is not working, and it must change if we are to salvage our mission and seek to leave behind a functioning government in Baghdad that can defend its national borders and contain internal violence. It is time to recognize the reality of Iraq as it is today, get our mission right, and allow our troops to begin coming home with the honor they deserve.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator TESTER be recognized following my presentation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, the Senate has passed a piece of legislation that includes funding for our troops who are committed to action in Iraq and other parts of the world, especially Iraq and Afghanistan. I expect there will be no controversy about the issue of funding, although we have provided more funding for the soldiers than requested by the President, but there are other portions of the legislation that are controversial. I understand that. But I wish to talk about something that has not been talked about nearly enough as we send our soldiers to war.

William Manchester wrote a book called "The Glory and the Dream." I remember, when I read that book, thinking about what an unbelievable commitment this country made during the Second World War. We have now been at war in Iraq longer than we were at war in the Second World War.

Let me take a couple of brief comments from "The Glory and the Dream," written by Manchester, about what this country did during the Second World War.

This country geared up. Its factories were humming. Rosie the Riveter was riveting, and we had output from our factories that was nearly unbelievable in support of the war effort. There was rationing. There were all kinds of things happening in which the country supported the war effort and supported the soldiers.

Let me quote:

From an initial keel-to-delivery time of over 200 days, Henry Kaiser cut the average work time on a liberty ship to 40 days. In 1944, he was launching a new escort aircraft carrier every week, and they were turning out entire cargo ships in 17 days. During the first 212 days of 1945, they completed 247 cargo ships, better than 1 a day.

That is what this country mobilized to do during the Second World War.

From the same book, "The Glory and the Dream," quote:

In the 5 years following the French collapse, America turned out: 296,000 warplanes, 102,000 tanks, 2.4 million trucks, 8,700 warships, and 5,400 cargo ships.

Now, why did that happen? Because this country mobilized. This country's factories were humming.

At a meeting, Joseph Stalin observed to the American President—the American President, FDR, Joseph Stalin, and Winston Churchill. Stalin said: We couldn't win this war without America's production.

This country mobilized.

Now, let me read something. Just understanding that in 1944, we were producing 4,000 warplanes a month, 50,000 warplanes a year, let me read something. Colonel Hammes came and testified last year at a policy committee hearing I chaired, and here is what he said:

Since the improvised explosive devices exploded in Iraq in the summer of 2003, we as a country have known—

I am quoting him—

we have known there are better and safer vehicles available than the armored HUMVEE—for instance, the M-1117 armored security vehicle. Yet in 3 years, the Pentagon has purchased less than 1,000 of them. I find it remarkable that a Nation that could produce 4,000 warplanes a month during World War II can produce 45 armored vehicles per month today.

Continuing to quote:

We didn't ask soldiers to invade France in 1944 with the inferior equipment they had in 1941. Why are we asking our soldiers and Marines to use the same armor that was insufficient in 2003? It's simple. The administration has refused to dedicate the resources necessary to make it happen. It is content to let our troops ride in inferior vehicles.

Continuing to quote:

The administration has failed to replace and maintain the equipment necessary for the units to be ready for other potential operations, although our units lack equipment to train, our repair depots are working single shifts and 5 days a week. The American people haven't refused to provide what our people need in the battlefield, the administration has refused to ask for the funding. The failure to provide our best equipment is a serious moral failure on the part of our leadership.

Now, why do I raise this question today? In the Second World War, in 1944, we were producing 4,000 warplanes a month, and yet we have not mobilized. We have sent troops abroad to go to war, but the message here at home is to go shopping. Troops go to the war, we go to the mall. We haven't mobilized.

Let me read to you a letter dated 1 March 2007. This is from the Marine Commandant about a vehicle called the MRAP vehicle, the mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicle, a vehicle that is much stronger than the humvee, much safer than the humvee our soldiers are now riding in in Iraq on patrol.

This is from the Marine Corps Commandant, in his memorandum to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

The MRAP vehicle has a dramatically better record of preventing fatal and serious injuries from attacks by improvised explosive devices. We estimate that the use of the MRAP could reduce the casualties in vehicles due to IED attacks by as much as 80 percent.

Now, think of that, 3,325 U.S. troops have been killed in Iraq, and 70 percent of those casualties have come as a result of IEDs. The Commandant of the Marine Corps says the MRAP vehicle would save 80 percent of those casualties. Eighty percent. No marines have died in 300 separate attacks on MRAP vehicles by IEDs, according to BG John Allen, deputy commander of coalition forces in Anbar Province—300 attacks on MRAP vehicles and no marines have died.

Now, why do I raise all this? Well, we need about 6,700 of these MRAP vehicles if this country is intending to provide the best equipment for our troops

who are on patrol in Iraq. Until recent months, we were producing about 45 a month. Let me say that again. We are sending soldiers to war, and there is a vehicle that the Commandant of the Marine Corps says will save 80 percent of the lives now being lost in these IED explosions because this is a much safer vehicle than the humvee. It is called the MRAP. But we are not mobilized to produce the MRAP. No one has said: This is urgent, let's provide the best equipment for these soldiers.

So what did we do? Well, in the 2007 Omnibus appropriations bill, we added money. Yes, we in Congress added money for it. In the bill we just voted for today, we added money for it because the President wasn't requesting sufficient money. We have a need for 6,700 of them. The administration, with all of their requests, would fund less than a third of that. In their 2008 budget request, which would take effect next October, once again it is underfunded.

Let me show a picture, if I might, a photograph of what is called the MRAP vehicle. Three versions of the MRAP. The Defense Department experts say that soldiers on patrol, riding in this version of the MRAP 80 percent of the soldiers who would otherwise lose their lives from IED explosives will be saved. Think of that. With 300 attacks against this vehicle, not 1 life has been lost. Yet we have soldiers patrolling in Iraq with vehicles much less safe, and 70 percent of the 3,325 troops who have been killed have been killed as a result of IEDs, riding in vehicles that are not as safe as this vehicle, and until recently we were producing 45 a month. That is unbelievable. A country that could send everyone into its factories and have those factories humming three shifts a day and produce 4,000 warplanes a month and a liberty ship a day, every single day, the country that won the Second World War with its prodigious productions, supporting its wonderful troops, that country can't mobilize? This President can't ask that country to mobilize? We have to stick money in this supplemental bill above the President's request in order to say that this is a priority, this is urgent, this is about saving the lives of soldiers?

Again, I raise the question because we are at war. Yet you would hardly know it, with respect to the daily lives most of us lead. In the Second World War, it wasn't that way. Yet we have been at this war longer than the Second World War. In the Second World War, here is what we produced—the might of American production, in which a nation came together to say that we are going to support our troops and beat back the forces of fascism and defeat Adolf Hitler and where we produced 296,000 warplanes—think of it—and 8,762 warships. We didn't do that working one shift a day. We didn't do that making 45 MRAPs a month. This country mobilized then, but it is not mobilized now.

So we passed a piece of legislation here today. It has some areas the President says will persuade him to veto it. I assume this is not one of those areas. The President didn't request this funding for MRAPs. He should have. He didn't request enough funding in the coming fiscal year. He should have. If this country is going to send its soldiers to war, then we, all of us in this country, have an obligation to send them to war with the very finest equipment available to protect them and to help them. Regrettably, that is not now the case.

Early on in this war, I received e-mail pictures, photographs from Iraq, from soldiers showing me their humvees with welded pieces of metal on the doors, metal they pulled out of a scrap heap and welded to a door to try to strengthen it because those humvees weren't up-armored. Even now, much later, when all of the humvees on patrol are up-armored, we know there is a much safer vehicle that will save, we think, 80 percent of the fatalities that now exist through IEDs. There is no excuse—no excuse, in my judgment—for our not having three shifts at every plant available to produce these vehicles and get them to our soldiers in Iraq and save these lives. That is what we did in this supplemental appropriations bill.

When anyone talks about undercutting or undermining soldiers, I refer them to this. This was the first time, today, in which this Congress said to the President and said to the country we are going to mobilize. We insist that if we send soldiers to war, we want them to go to war with the finest equipment available with the potential to save their lives.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. KLOBUCHAR). The Senator from Montana is recognized.

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I rise today to express my support for the conference report on the emergency supplemental appropriations bill we passed early this afternoon. This bill needs to be signed by the President. It will do a lot of good for a lot of people in this great country. It will not only help our troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, but also millions of Americans who have suffered over the last year due to drought and the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

This bill has nearly \$7 billion for cleanup and recovery on the gulf coast, which is, 18 months later, still dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. There is \$1.8 billion for veterans health care in this supplemental, to give our veterans the care they deserve when they return from serving our Nation. It contains \$3.5 billion for agricultural assistance, assistance that is desperately needed. I have heard from several farmers in Montana about the drought and how it has devastated their farms and how they are barely hanging on.

Tom Lightner, a farmer and rancher from north of Choteau, MT, grows

wheat, barley, and alfalfa, and he used to run some cattle. But the continuing drought has hurt his operation. The reservoir near his operation, Bynum Reservoir, has been almost empty for the past 5 years because of this drought, and in 2005 Tom had to sell off his 120 head of cattle he used to run on his ranch. In February of this year, Tom wrote me this letter. What it says is:

I am writing to you in need of your assistance. I own and operate a small farm and ranch north of Choteau. Because of the continuing drought conditions in this area, making it from one year to the next has been a real challenge. In my present circumstances, it may become impossible [to stay in business].

Now Tom is in danger of losing his crop insurance and is looking for help from me, and from us, and from the President, to help him through these difficult times.

Another farmer in Montana, from Dagmar, wrote about conditions last year during the growing season. He writes that it is a foggy morning, no meaningful precipitation, but it cooled down some, which is good news in the heat of summer with little moisture. But the damage was done. Some of the late seeding re-crop had the top half of the head burnt right off.

What does that mean, in a nutshell? He is not going to cut much of a crop and it is not going to have much quality when he does get it in the bin. What does that mean in reality? That means no money to pay expenses, to pay for insurance, to pay for heating, to pay for seeding costs; no money to buy groceries, to pay that operating loan or mortgage loan.

That is why it is so critically important that the President of the United States sign this supplemental. Farmers and ranchers in Montana and throughout this country have suffered long enough. They have dedicated their lives to feeding the world, and it is the very least we can do to provide them with the assistance they need to keep going.

Before I finish, I want to talk a little bit about our great men and women who are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. They have done everything we have asked and they have done it very well. This supplemental bill also gives our troops all the funding they need, and more, to meet the needs not addressed by the President's request. It provides a plan to get our troops out of the Middle East in this civil war they find themselves engaged in, and back to fighting the real war, the war on terrorism.

It sets a goal, not a deadline, of being out of Iraq by the spring of 2008. But it allows our troops to continue to train the Iraqi security forces, to conduct operations against terrorist groups, and to protect United States assets. This is hardly handcuffing the President of this country. This is a responsible plan to continue our fight against terrorism while getting our troops out of this Iraqi civil war.

For these reasons, I urge the President of the United States to sign this emergency supplemental into law. No more excuses, sign the supplemental. Our troops, our farmers, the people of this country, deserve no less.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ALLARD. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ALLARD. Madam President, I understand we are in morning business, is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

#### BIPARTISANSHIP

Mr. ALLARD. Madam President, I came to the floor today to express my surprise that any Member of this body could attempt to characterize the current political situation as one in which the administration is failing to work with Congress. Any realistic discussion of today's political climate must revolve around the fact that the current majority has refused to work in any meaningful way with the minority party. The most blatant example of this is in the use of cloture by the majority leader to avoid consensus on the consideration of legislation.

In the 110th Congress, the majority leader so far has filed 24 cloture motions. During the same timeframe in the first session of the 109th Congress, Republicans had only filed five cloture motions. In the 108th Congress, by this date Republicans had only filed five cloture motions.

Just as surprising were the circumstances that surrounded General Petraeus's briefing yesterday. What I found remarkable was the original instinct of the Speaker of the House and our Senate majority leader was to avoid meeting the general here on Capitol Hill. Can you imagine that? The most important issue of our day is Iraq and the man we unanimously approved to lead our efforts is not worth their time to hear from? The only explanation for this is that the disdain felt by the majority in working with the minority and the administration was also extended to working with our military.

Of course, once it was clear that there was public outcry in not meeting General Petraeus, they relented. But what was also evident is there was an effort to avoid actually believing anything the general had to say about the situation on the ground. General Petraeus is not giving us information that has been filtered through some political process. He is giving a factual and sobering account of what is happening, block by block, in Iraq.

Yet the other side of the aisle, with a few exceptions, wants to cover their

ears and not listen to the facts. They would rather pretend they know what is going on in Iraq rather than hear it from the general again.

The situation in Iraq is a dynamic and ever-changing one, and after yesterday's briefing, it is more clear to me than ever that we must resist arbitrary deadlines to our fight in Iraq.

But my Democratic colleagues would rather play politics with our men and women in the field and score a few points for the far left wing of their party. They would rather play politics on the Senate floor than work to pass meaningful legislation.

I ask the majority leader and the other side of the aisle to put politics aside and do the right thing, work in a truly bipartisan manner to do what the American people expect us to do.

This obstruction and unwillingness to work in a truly bipartisan effort to provide funding to our troops who are even now in harm's way is outrageous and disappointing.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. KLOBUCHAR). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington is recognized.

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### FORMER SPEAKER JOHN O'BRIEN

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I rise today to commemorate and pay tribute to the life of a great Washingtonian, a great American, and someone who in the State of Washington will be remembered for his great contributions and who will be remembered across our country. I am talking about our former Washington State Speaker of the House, John L. O'Brien, who died this past week at the age of 95. Speaker O'Brien actually passed away on the last day of this year's legislative session, almost an appropriate dedication for him for the remembrance of his service in our State government.

I am proud to say John L. O'Brien was a good friend, a mentor, and someone who imparted a lot of political wisdom in the State of Washington. He served in our State legislature for 52 years, from 1939 to 1993, and he served as speaker of the house for a chunk of that period, 1955 to 1963. He served under nine different Governors. At one point in time, I believe, he held the record in our country for the longest serving State legislator.

He did a tremendous job as majority leader; I am sure at times as minority leader; as speaker, as I mentioned, speaker pro tem. I believe he served on every single committee in our State legislature. He led our State's government through some great challenges